

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [Sunday Worship Video Service](#)

- **Do you keep a nativity/manger scene in your home?** You may not be in the sanctuary this Christmas, but we would love for your photos to be in our worship video. We are asking for **pictures of the nativity scene(s)** from your home to be submitted to lrousseau@charleswoodunited.org by Sunday night.

- All are welcome to attend **Hebrews eCafé on Zoom** every Sunday at 10am for an hour of informal fellowship. Please join us by clicking <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82450894254?pwd=bzBvTElPdnJWRVZjTStvRS9taWdpZz09> or phoning 204 272 7920 and entering meeting number 824 5089 4254 and passcode 858358

- **For Children:** Cool School video 6 is available by clicking here: <https://youtu.be/J2q8O8lcAVk>
You are welcome to share this with others but please note that you must use the link provided. It is not available by search.

- **For Youth: Youth Christmas Zoom Party:** Jodie Poborsa will be hosting a youth group Dec 22nd at 7pm via zoom. Youth are encouraged to dress up festively and to have answers for the following 3 questions: (For privacy please contact the church if you wish to join and we will provide you with the Zoom connection information)
 - What is something you have learnt about yourself over this past year?
 - What is the one thing you have missed the most this past year?
 - What is something special or meaningful you will do doing this holiday season?

- **Christmas Eve:** Our Christmas Eve service will be posted on Thursday, December 24. A link will be sent to you by email. Christmas Eve is a communion service. If you wish to partake, please have elements of bread and juice/water with you before the service begins.

- We have launched a **Lights for Lives Book of Remembrance**. You may visit it here: <https://charleswoodunited.org/lights-for-lives/> To add a name please contact the church office by phone (204-832-3667) or email (office@charleswoodunited.org)

- Please enjoy our online worship and feel free to share with others. The link for sharing is: <https://youtu.be/V53iPa29a00>

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, December 20, 2020.

We can be forgiven for thinking that the themes of Advent exist and are separate one from the other. After all each theme gets its own Sunday of observance. Each theme gets its own candle (don't forget that 'pink' means 'joy'). Sometimes we sing advent songs and each theme gets its own verse. There is one for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love. I think it's a great tradition, a good teaching tool, and a very positive, very spiritual way to approach Christmas.

But let us not forget that the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love reside on one wreath. They are not loosely connected but are integral parts of a whole. Call them gifts, or words, or ideas but they all try to convey the same message albeit from a different angle. That message is that in the birth of Jesus there is an invitation to join the heavenly chorus in the angel's song of glad tidings, "Peace on Earth! Good News to all."

There is a unity in Christmas, you see it in the wreath, a power to bring and bind things together. We know it in our personal experience and personal longings. Christmas seemingly wants to pull us into the company of others, be it around a tree, a table, and an act of worship. It has an almost mystical power to restore our belief that the desire for human community is a true and trusted thing.

I would argue that this unity extends to all aspects of our life together, especially during Advent and Christmas. Crafts and carols, candles and communion, hampers and heralds, prayers and preaching, Bethlehem and baking, knitting and kneading, trumpets and trees, they all come together in a season that can only, ever be about a single point of goodness and grace.

As so as we come to the place where we are rueful that we cannot be together singing lullabies and hearing the story of a starry night, let us remember that Christmas has not passed us by. The other day we received a message at the church. It asked to be addressed to everyone and this format seems the best way to honour that request. It came as a thank you note, sent by text, from a recipient of a Christmas Hamper, to the person who delivered it and forwarded to the office. It says, in part, *"My family was blessed with a hamper from your church and we really wanted to thank you so very much for your kindness and caring...Please send our gratitude to the church. We were in desperate need of the help and have been struggling for a while now. So please know you helped a family in great need."* We are humbled by these kind words and we need not be thanked. But let this serve as a reminder that it is out of our life together that lives, including our own, change for the better.

There is a unity in Christmas that will not be denied. We are joined one to another as sure as the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love surround the Christ candle in a warm and tender glow on the Advent wreath.

I wish we were together this Christmas. But we are not apart.

Grace and peace,
Michael

P.S. For news and events please have a look at the Life & Work insert: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/life-work/>

P.P.S. You can support the ministry of Charleswood United Church by visiting: www.charleswoodunited.org/donate. Thank you to all those who have continued to contribute regularly.